

NACHIKETA

*and other tales from
the Upanishads*

AMAR
CHITRA
KATHA



APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE



AUTHORITY

The three stories depicted here are from the Upanishads. The Upanishads are also called Vedanta or "the end of the Veda" because they form the last branch of Vedic literature and because one finds in them the final aim of the Vedas—that of self-realisation.

The word Upanishad literally means "to sit down by someone". This throws light on the system of education prevalent in ancient India. When a pupil approached a guru to seek instruction from him, the guru would decide what to teach after assessing his receptivity. Thus, in the first story, Yama tests Nachiketa before giving him further instruction.

In the Vedic period, learning was achieved by direct experience rather than by verbal instruction. Nature was the teacher, as we find in the story of Satyakama. Even when verbal instruction was imparted, it was kept to the barest minimum. Prajapati, in our third story, utters, as instruction a single syllable—"DA". Obviously, the teachers of the Vedic age did not believe in long discourses! And what the teacher said was understood and interpreted differently by each pupil in the light of his own experience.

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NACHIKETA



THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, THERE LIVED A SAGE CALLED VAJASHRAVA. HE HAD A SON NAMED NACHIKETA.

LITTLE NACHIKETA USED TO WATCH HIS FATHER PERFORM YAJNAS.*



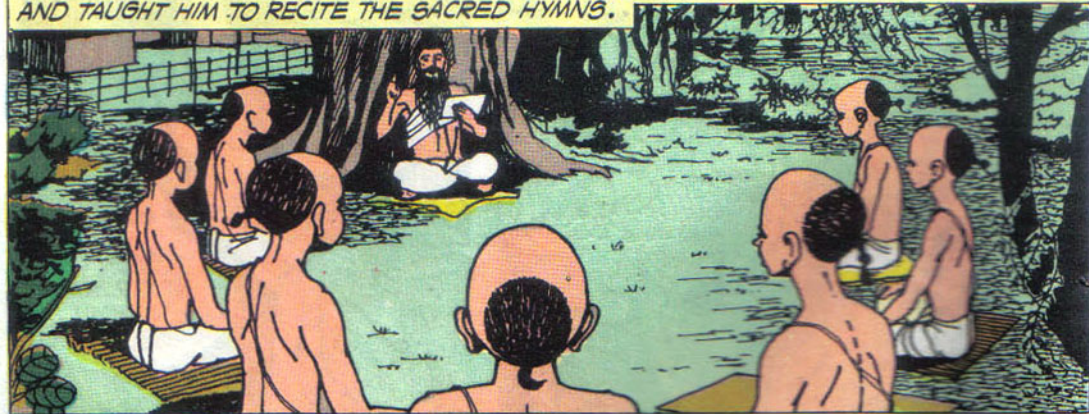
ONE DAY WHEN NACHIKETA WAS ABOUT EIGHT YEARS OLD —

FATHER, WHEN WILL YOU LET ME WORSHIP THE SACRED FIRE?

SOON AFTER YOUR INITIATION, SON.

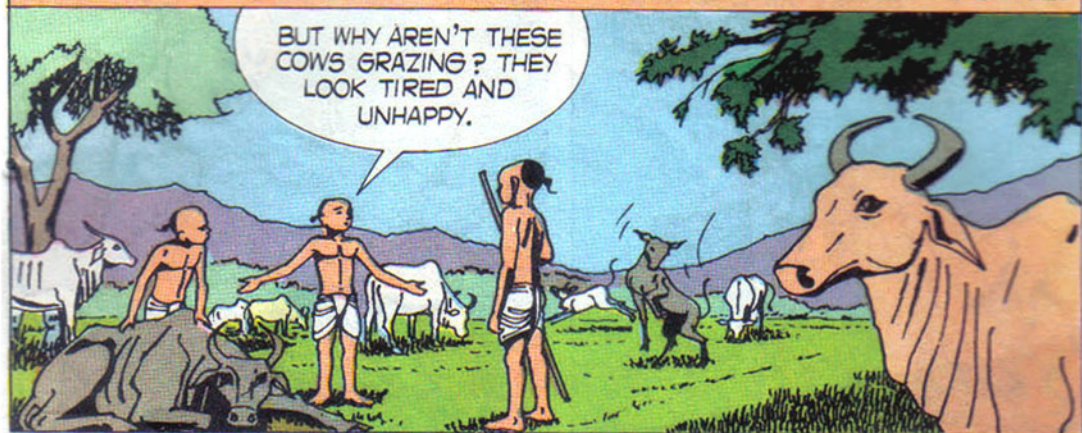


NACHIKETA WENT TO A GURUKULA, A FOREST-SCHOOL, WHERE HIS GURU INITIATED HIM AND TAUGHT HIM TO RECITE THE SACRED HYMNS.



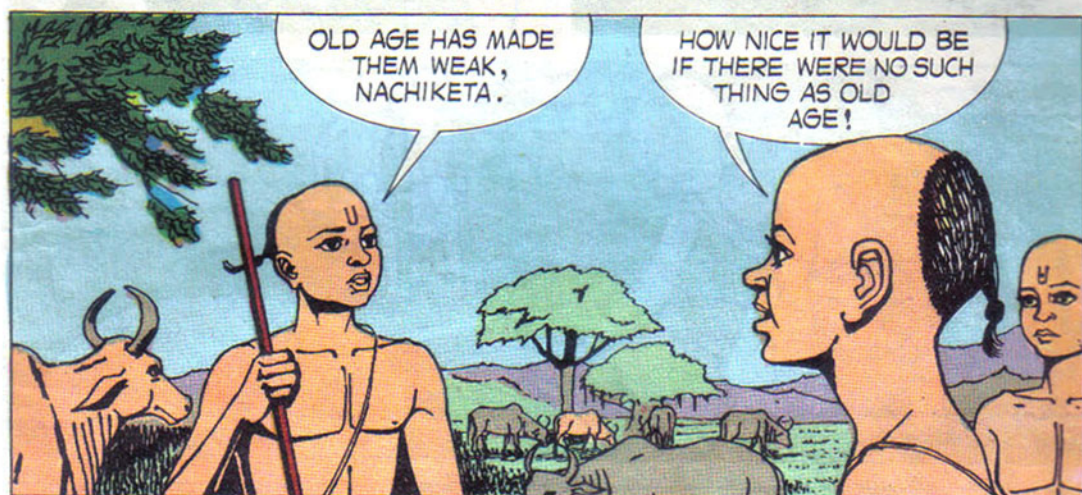
NACHIKETA AND ANOTHER BOY WERE ASSIGNED THE TASK OF LOOKING AFTER THE CATTLE.

BUT WHY AREN'T THESE COWS GRAZING? THEY LOOK TIRED AND UNHAPPY.



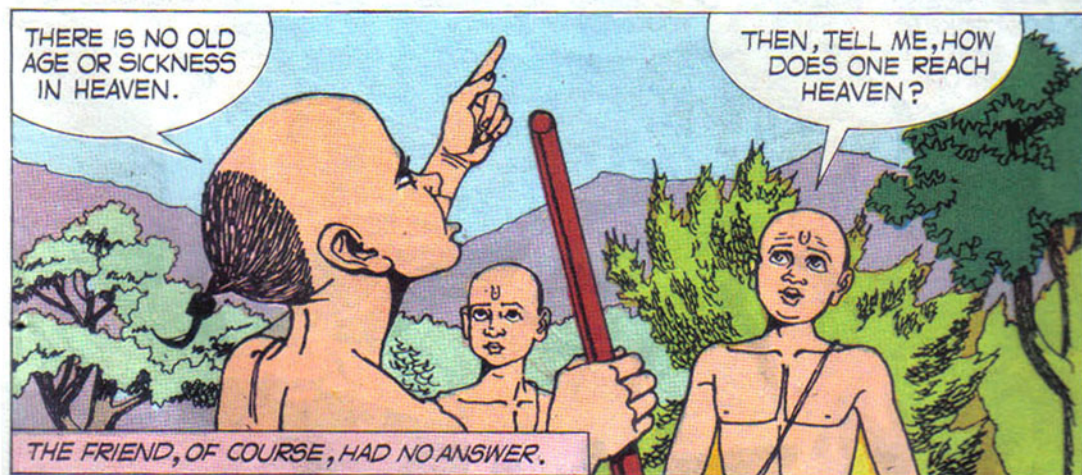
OLD AGE HAS MADE THEM WEAK, NACHIKETA.

HOW NICE IT WOULD BE IF THERE WERE NO SUCH THING AS OLD AGE!



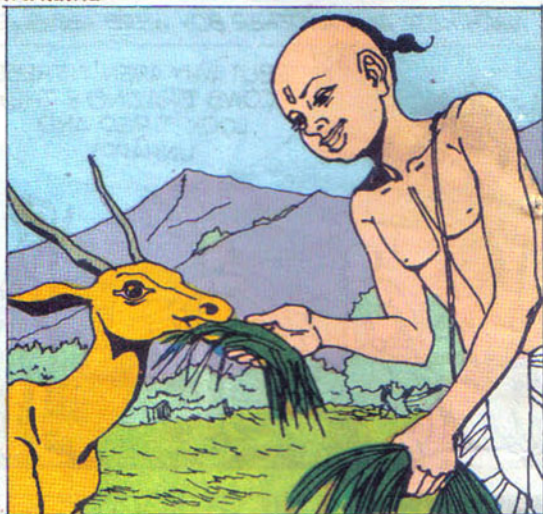
THERE IS NO OLD AGE OR SICKNESS IN HEAVEN.

THEN, TELL ME, HOW DOES ONE REACH HEAVEN?

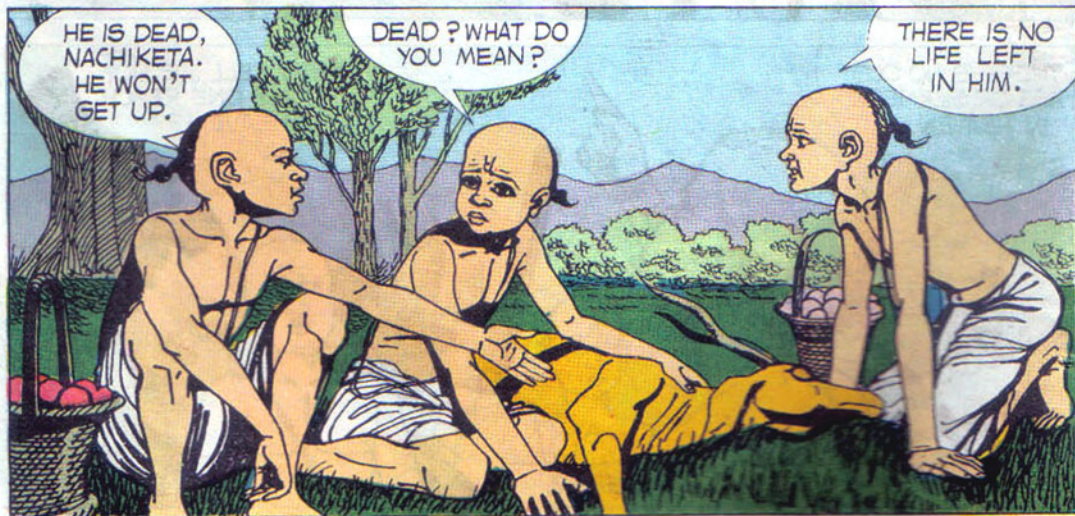
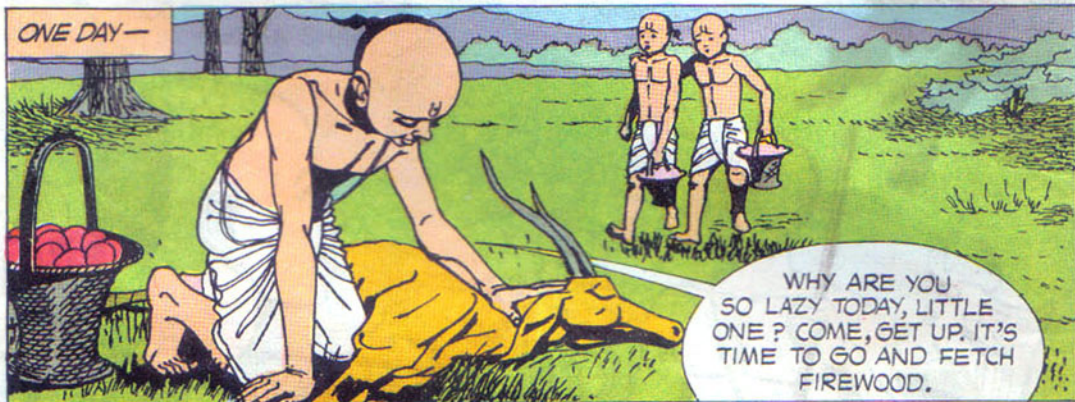


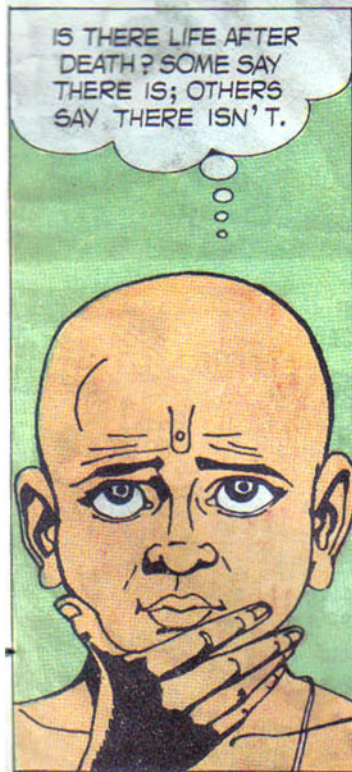
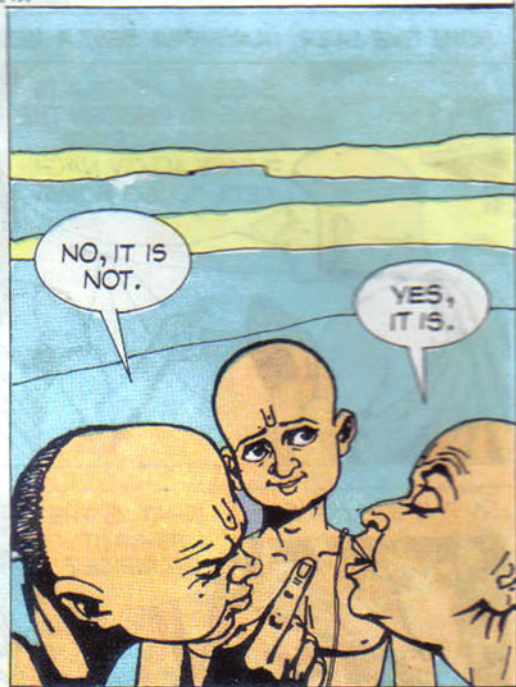
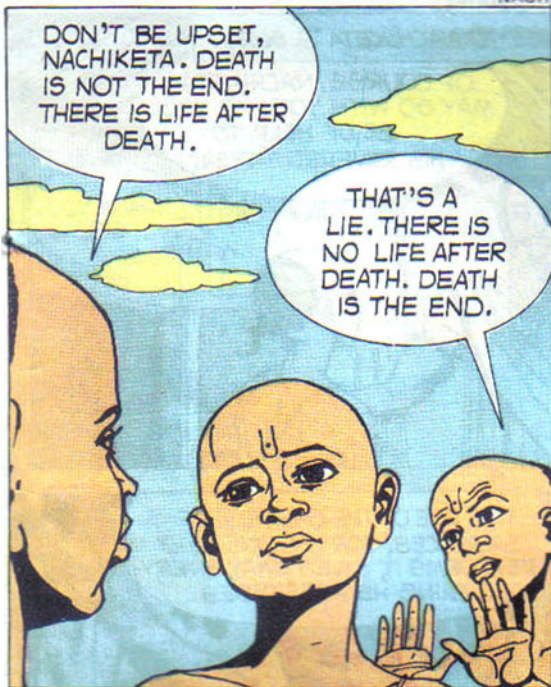
THE FRIEND, OF COURSE, HAD NO ANSWER.

A DEER HAD GROWN QUITE FOND OF NACHIKETA AND USED TO FOLLOW HIM WHENEVER HE WENT OUT TO GATHER FIREWOOD.



ONE DAY —



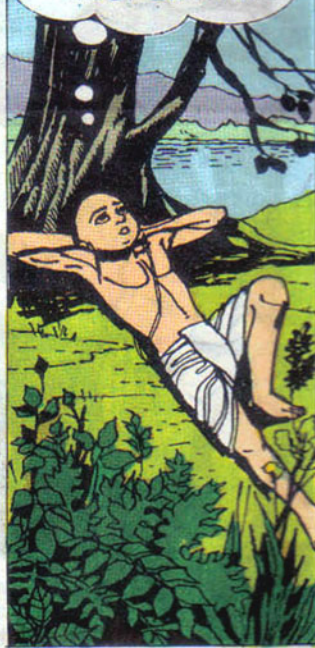


FINALLY, HE TURNED TO HIS GURU FOR AN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION THAT WAS TROUBLING HIM.

IT IS A DIFFICULT QUESTION, MY SON. EACH ONE MUST DISCOVER THE TRUTH FOR HIMSELF.



HOW CAN I FIND AN ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION? THERE MUST BE A WAY!



SOME TIME LATER, VAJASHRAVA SENT A MESSAGE TO NACHIKETA'S GURU.

SAGE VAJASHRAVA IS GOING TO PERFORM THE VISHVAJIT SACRIFICE. PLEASE ALLOW NACHIKETA TO GO HOME.

OF COURSE, NACHIKETA MAY GO WITH YOU. HE WILL BE OF HELP TO HIS REVERED FATHER.

THANK YOU, SIR.

ON THE WAY HOME —

WHAT IS THE VISHVAJIT SACRIFICE?

IT IS ONE OF THE GREATEST OF SACRIFICES, FOR THE ONE WHO PERFORMS IT, GIVES AWAY EVERYTHING HE POSSESSES.

LOOK! ALL THOSE BRAHMANNS ARE HEADING FOR OUR HERMITAGE TO RECEIVE YOUR FATHER'S GIFTS.

WHEN NACHIKETA REACHED HOME —



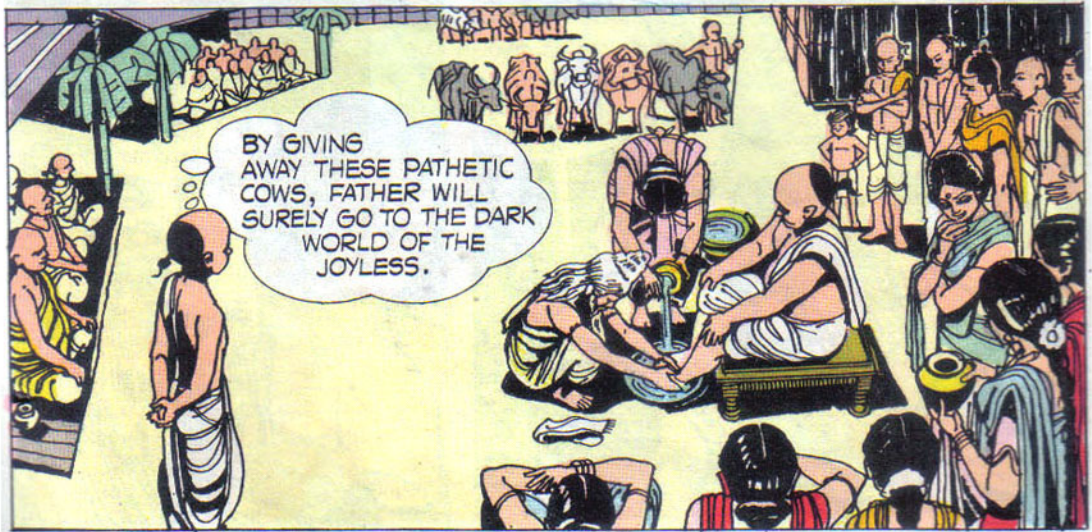
YOU ARE JUST IN TIME, MY SON. HELP MY DISCIPLES BRING IN THE COWS.



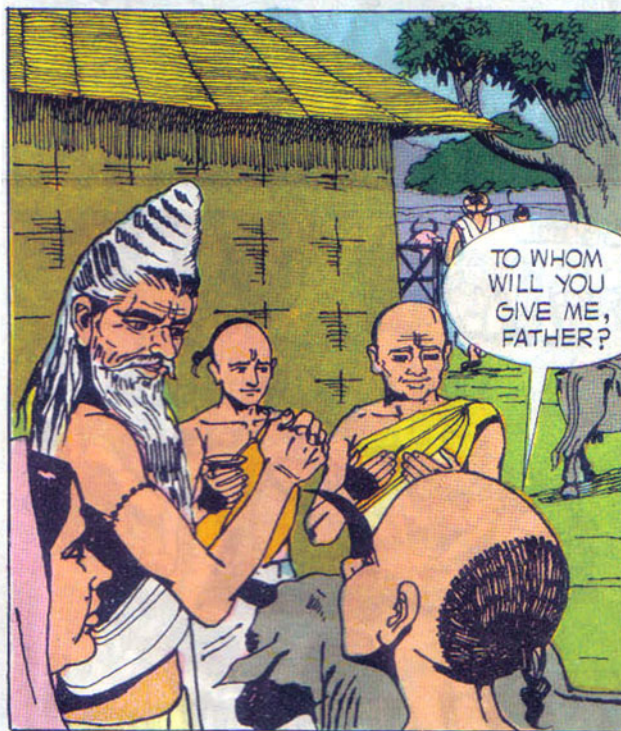
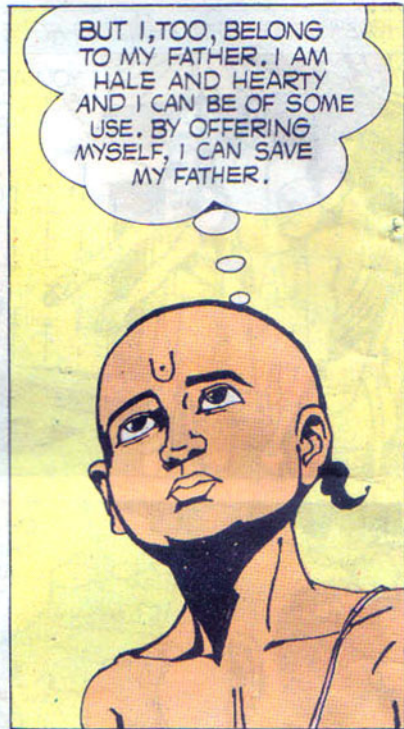
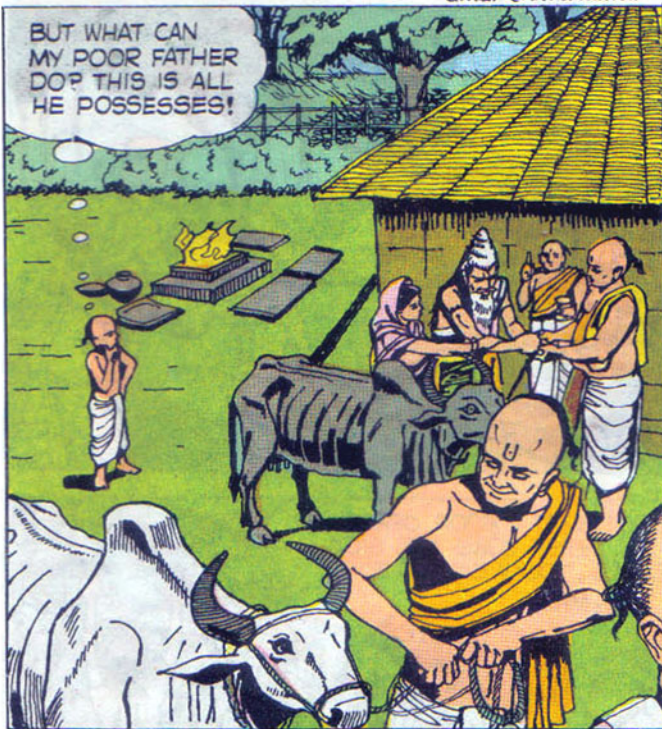
YES, FATHER.



OH, GOD! WHAT A POOR OFFERING THIS IS! THESE COWS ARE SICK AND OLD, TOO WEAK TO GIVE MILK.



BY GIVING AWAY THESE PATHETIC COWS, FATHER WILL SURELY GO TO THE DARK WORLD OF THE JOYLESS.



NACHIKETA ASKED THE SAME QUESTION AGAIN.



RECEIVING NO ANSWER, NACHIKETA REPEATED HIS QUESTION FOR THE THIRD TIME.

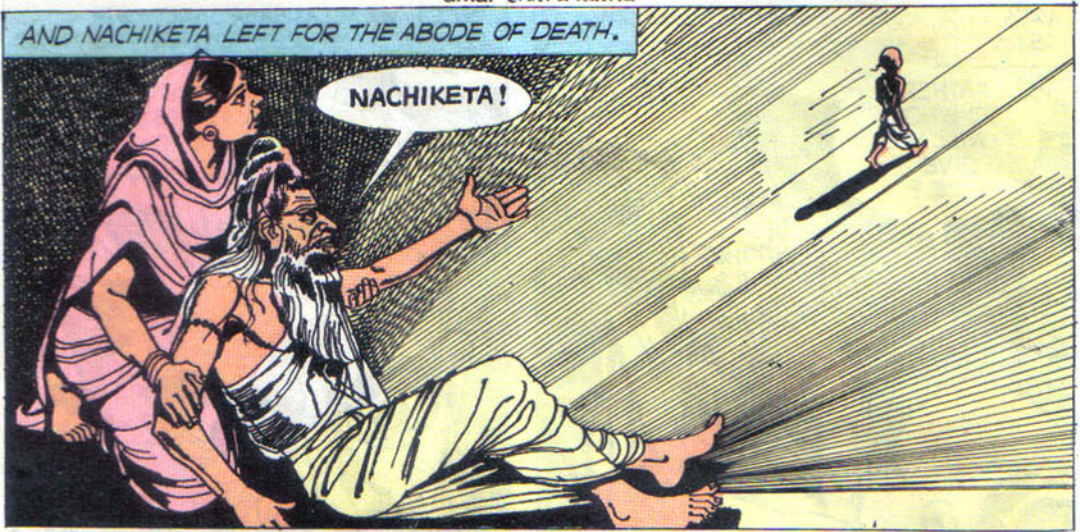


THE SAGE REGRETTED HIS ANGRY WORDS IMMEDIATELY.



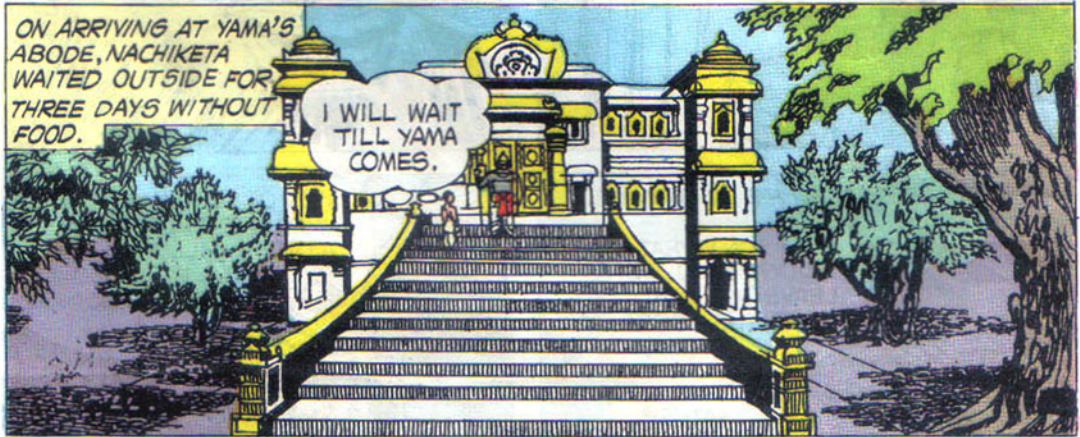
AND NACHIKETA LEFT FOR THE ABODE OF DEATH.

NACHIKETA!



ON ARRIVING AT YAMA'S ABODE, NACHIKETA WAITED OUTSIDE FOR THREE DAYS WITHOUT FOOD.

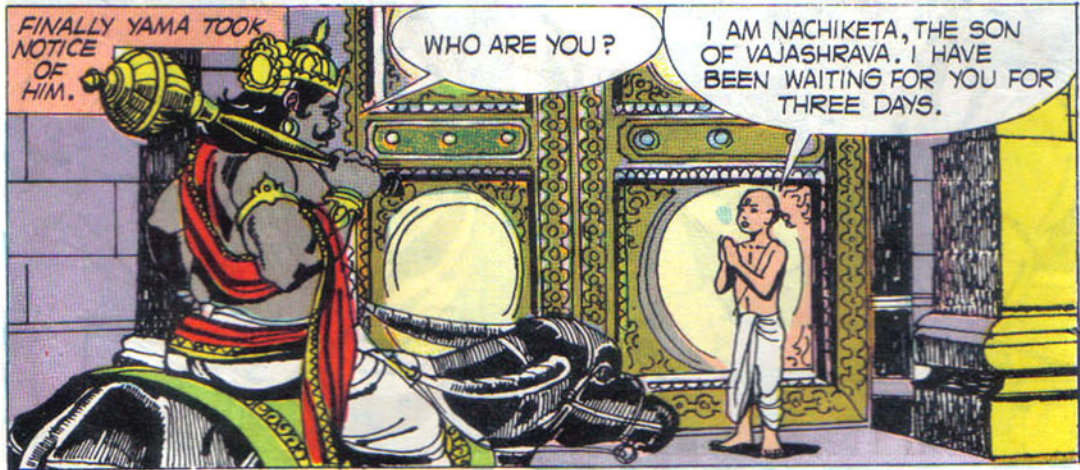
I WILL WAIT TILL YAMA COMES.



FINALLY YAMA TOOK NOTICE OF HIM.

WHO ARE YOU ?

I AM NACHIKETA, THE SON OF VAJASHRAVA. I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU FOR THREE DAYS.



DID NO ONE
RECEIVE YOU AND
OFFER YOU
FOOD?

NO, MY
LORD.

THEN A VOICE WAS HEARD.

HOPE AND EXPECTATIONS,
SACRIFICES AND GOOD
DEEDS ARE ALL
SNATCHED AWAY FROM HIM
WHO DOES NOT OFFER
HOSPITALITY TO A
BRAHMANA.

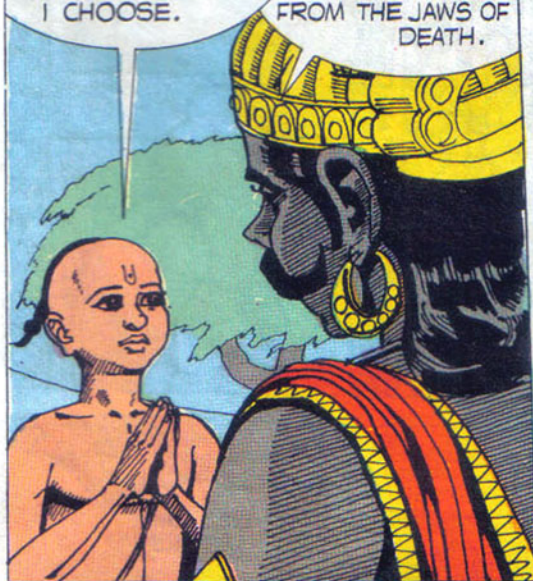
HOW CAN
I ATONE?

FINALLY, YAMA FOUND A WAY OUT—

SINCE YOU HAVE
COME AS A GUEST AND
HAVE RECEIVED NO
HOSPITALITY FOR THREE
DAYS, YOU MAY
CHOOSE THREE
BOONS.

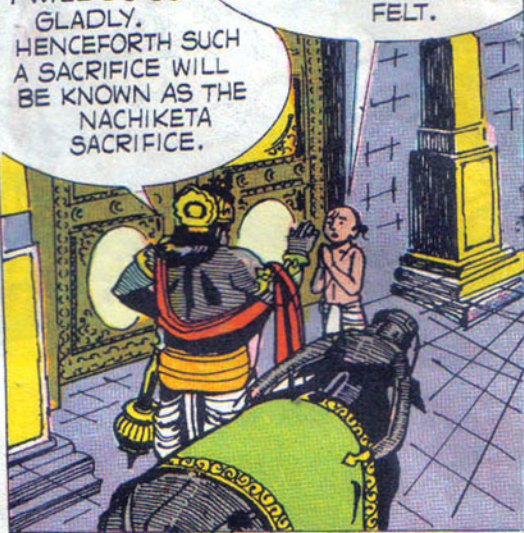
GRANT MY FATHER
PEACE OF MIND
AND MAKE HIM
CHEERFUL. THIS IS
THE FIRST BOON
I CHOOSE.

HE SHALL HAVE
IT. HE WILL GREET
YOU CHEERFULLY
WHEN HE SEES
YOU RELEASED
FROM THE JAWS OF
DEATH.



IN HEAVEN THERE IS NO
HUNGER, THIRST, OLD
AGE OR DEATH. TEACH ME
THE SACRIFICE BY THE
PERFORMANCE OF WHICH
NO HUNGER AND
THIRST WILL BE
FELT.

I WILL DO SO
GLADLY.
HENCEFORTH SUCH
A SACRIFICE WILL
BE KNOWN AS THE
NACHIKETA
SACRIFICE.

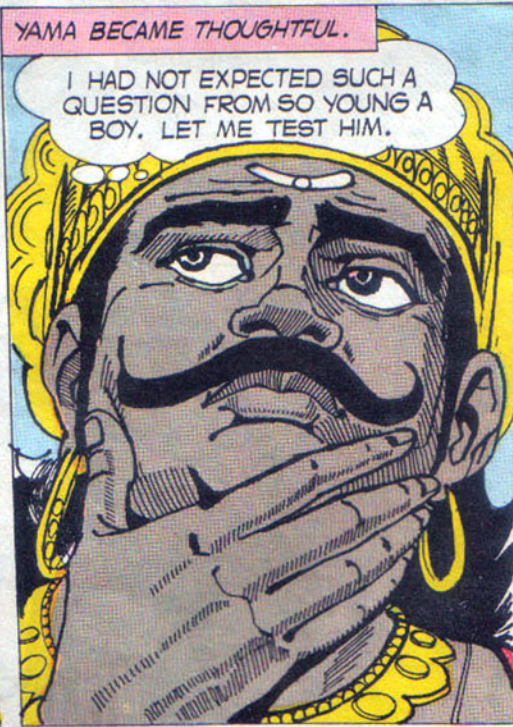


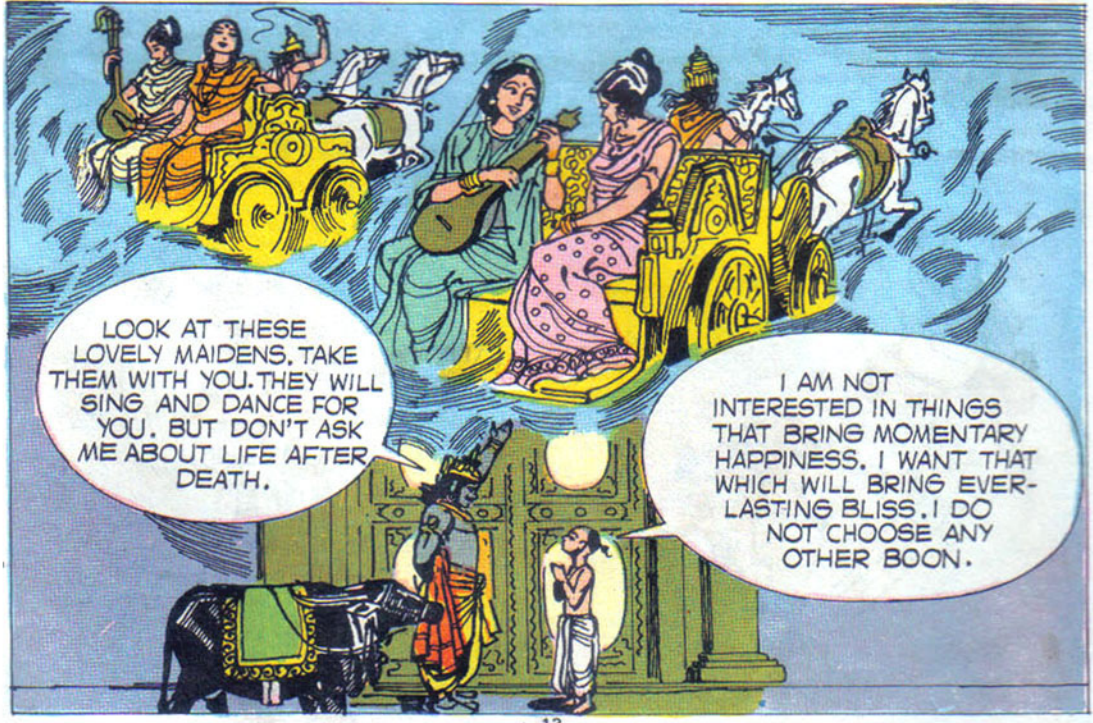
SOME PEOPLE
BELIEVE THAT THERE
IS LIFE AFTER DEATH;
OTHERS DON'T. TELL
ME WHO IS RIGHT.
THIS IS THE THIRD
BOON I CHOOSE.



YAMA BECAME THOUGHTFUL.

I HAD NOT EXPECTED SUCH A
QUESTION FROM SO YOUNG A
BOY. LET ME TEST HIM.





EVEN THE GODS ARE NOT CERTAIN ABOUT THIS. IT IS NOT EASILY UNDERSTOOD. ASK FOR SOMETHING ELSE.

WHO ELSE CAN MAKE IT UNDERSTANDABLE BUT YOU, WHO PRESIDE OVER DEATH? PLEASE INSTRUCT ME.

NACHIKETA, ASK FOR CATTLE, ELEPHANTS, GOLD, AN EMPIRE, LONG LIFE—ANYTHING BUT THIS

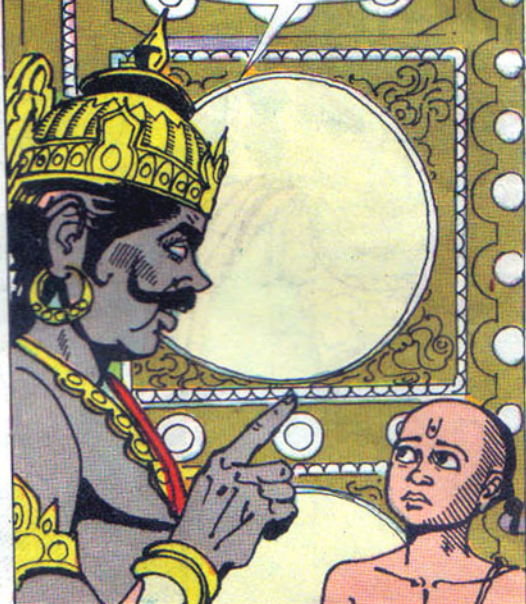
LOOK AT THESE LOVELY MAIDENS. TAKE THEM WITH YOU. THEY WILL SING AND DANCE FOR YOU. BUT DON'T ASK ME ABOUT LIFE AFTER DEATH.

I AM NOT INTERESTED IN THINGS THAT BRING MOMENTARY HAPPINESS. I WANT THAT WHICH WILL BRING EVER-LASTING BLISS. I DO NOT CHOOSE ANY OTHER BOON.

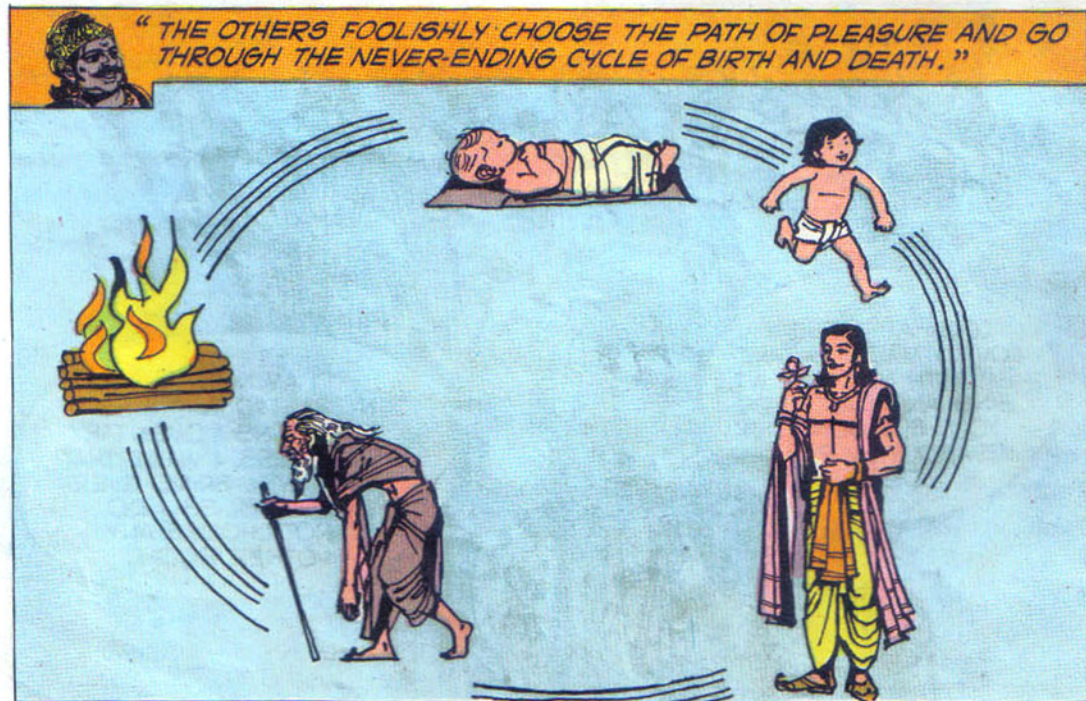
THIS BOY HAS
STEADFAST FAITH AND
IS FREE FROM TEMPTA-
TION. SINCE HE IS SO
WORTHY, I WILL
INSTRUCT HIM
FURTHER.



NACHIKETA, TWO PATHS ARE
OPEN TO MEN. THE WISE
TAKE THE GOOD PATH
AND REALISE THE
SELF.



"THE OTHERS FOOLISHLY CHOOSE THE PATH OF PLEASURE AND GO
THROUGH THE NEVER-ENDING CYCLE OF BIRTH AND DEATH."



YAMA PROCEEDED TO TEACH NACHIKETA
THE NATURE OF THE SELF.

WHEN A MAN IS DEAD,
IT IS THE BODY THAT
PERISHES, NOT
THE SELF.

BUT
AREN'T
THEY THE
SAME?

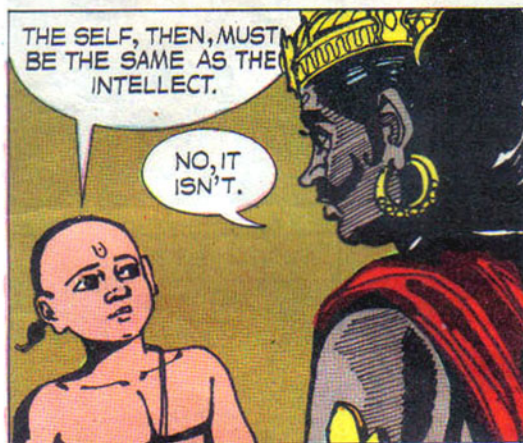


NO, THEY ARE NOT. THE
SELF RESIDES IN THE
BODY AS A MASTER
DOES IN HIS CHARIOT.
THE TWO ARE
DIFFERENT.

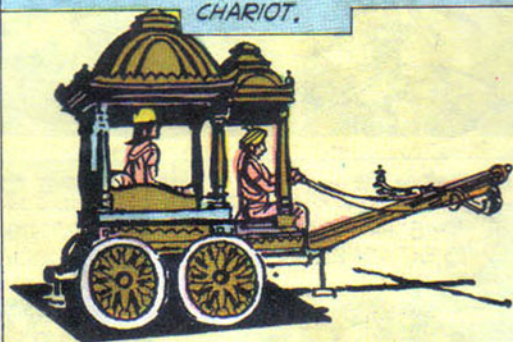


THE SELF, THEN, MUST
BE THE SAME AS THE
INTELLECT.

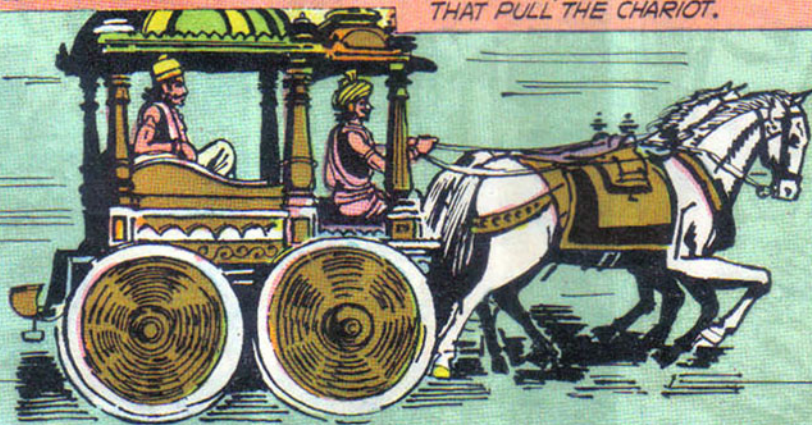
NO, IT
ISN'T.



"THE INTELLECT IS TO THE SELF WHAT THE
DRIVER IS TO THE MASTER OF THE
CHARIOT."



"THE SELF IS DIFFERENT FROM THE SENSE ORGANS, TOO, WHICH ARE LIKE THE HORSES
THAT PULL THE CHARIOT."



"MEN ARE PULLED IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS BY THE SENSE ORGANS.

"BY THE EYE —



"BY THE EAR —



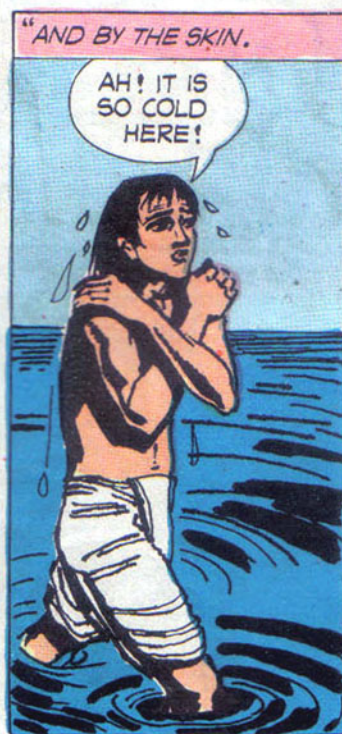
"BY THE NOSE —



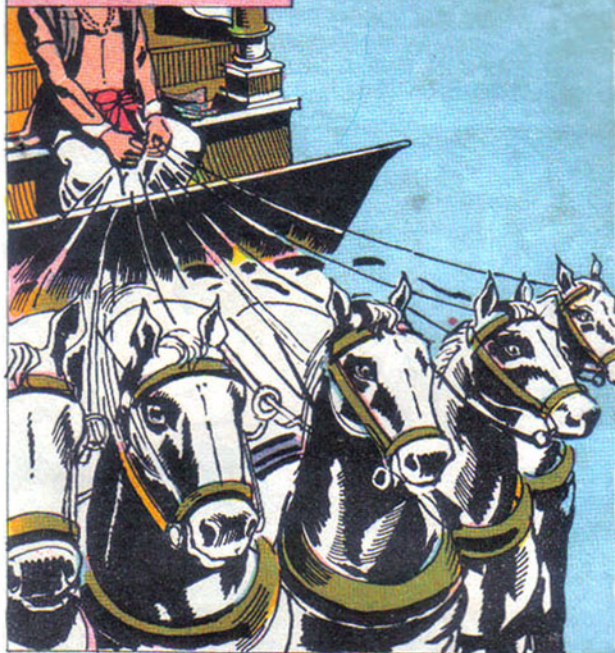
"BY THE TONGUE —



"AND BY THE SKIN.

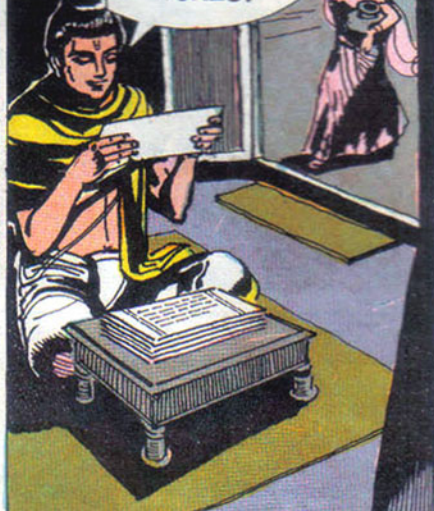


"JUST AS THE HORSES ARE HELD IN CHECK BY THE REINS...

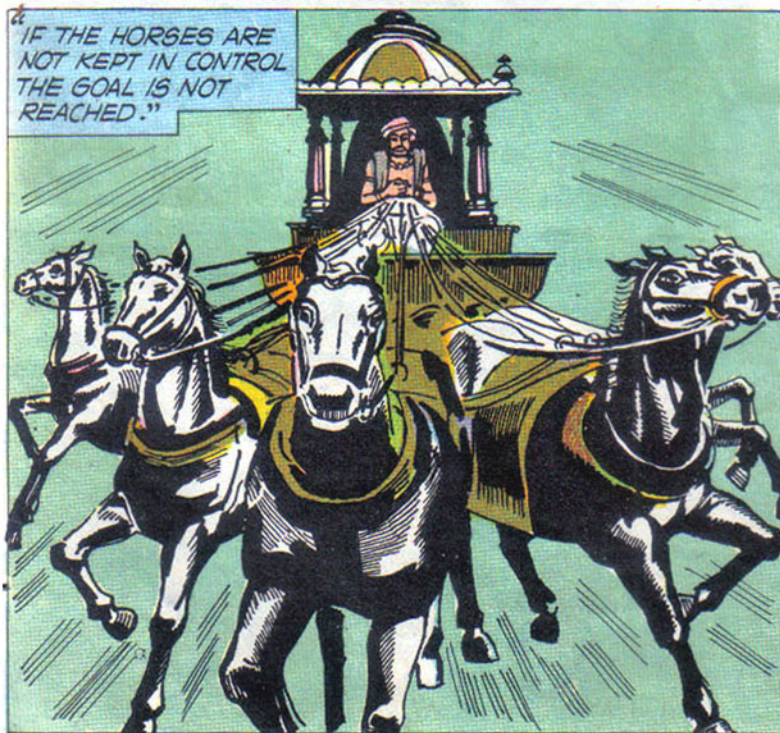


"...SO ALSO THE SENSE ORGANS ARE HELD IN CHECK BY THE MIND.

NO, I WON'T LOOK THAT WAY. LET ME CONCENTRATE ON STUDYING THESE SCRIPTURES.



"IF THE HORSES ARE NOT KEPT IN CONTROL THE GOAL IS NOT REACHED."

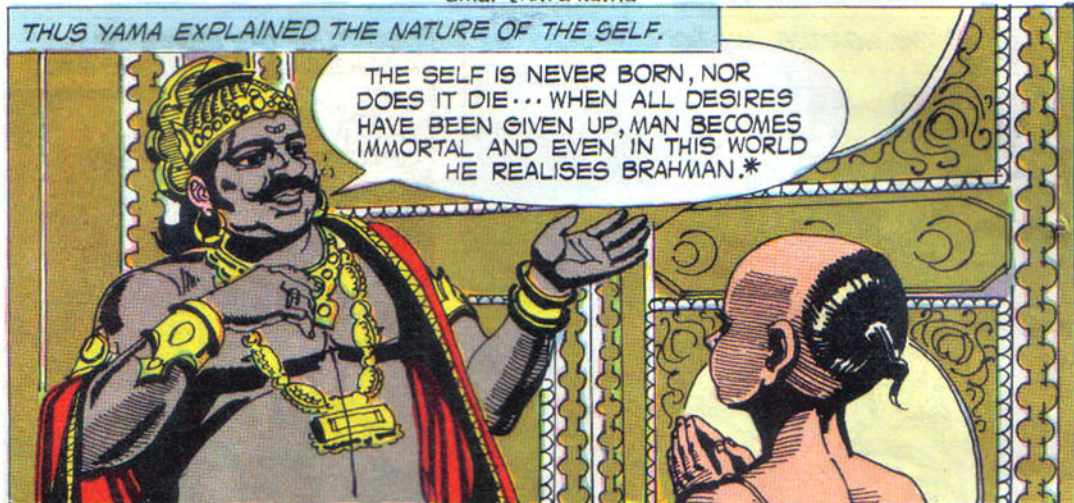


SIMILARLY, THE MAN WHO CANNOT CONTROL THE SENSES WON'T REACH HIS GOAL.



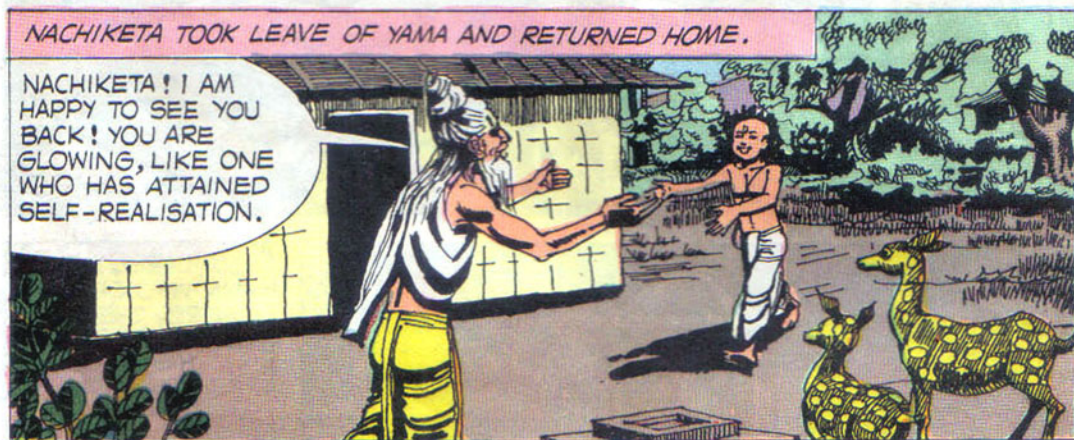
THUS YAMA EXPLAINED THE NATURE OF THE SELF.

THE SELF IS NEVER BORN, NOR DOES IT DIE... WHEN ALL DESIRES HAVE BEEN GIVEN UP, MAN BECOMES IMMORTAL AND EVEN IN THIS WORLD HE REALISES BRAHMAN.*



NACHIKETA TOOK LEAVE OF YAMA AND RETURNED HOME.

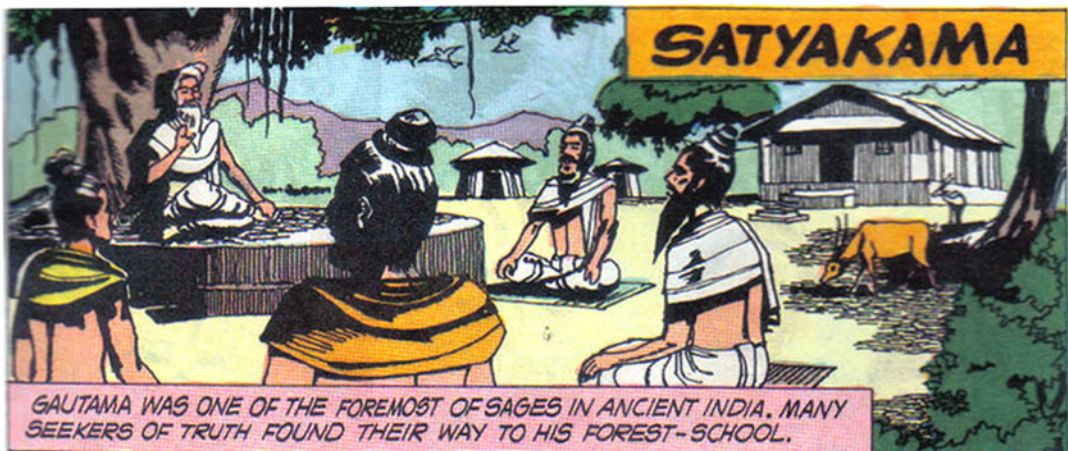
NACHIKETA! I AM HAPPY TO SEE YOU BACK! YOU ARE GLOWING, LIKE ONE WHO HAS ATTAINED SELF-REALISATION.



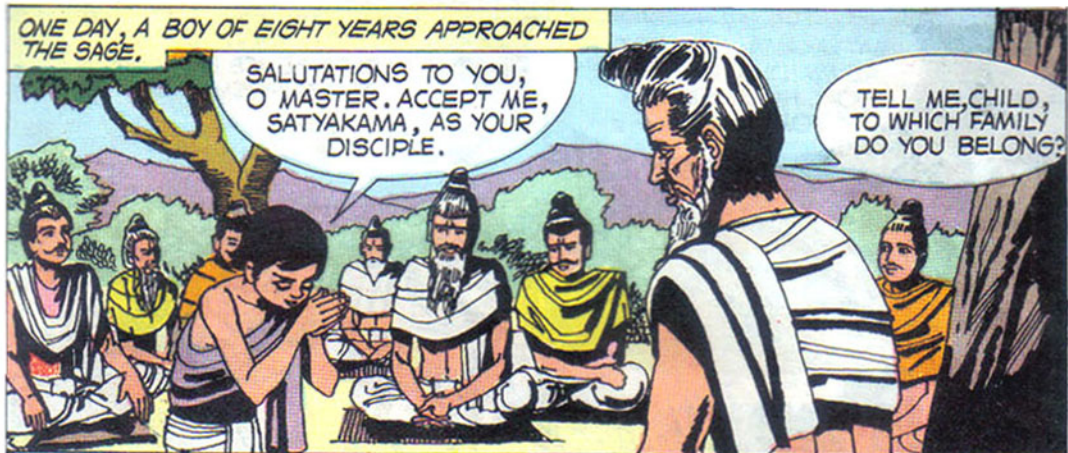
AS NACHIKETA GREW OLDER, HIS RENOWN SPREAD. LATER, MANY SEEKERS OF TRUTH CAME TO HIS HERMITAGE FOR GUIDANCE.



SATYAKAMA



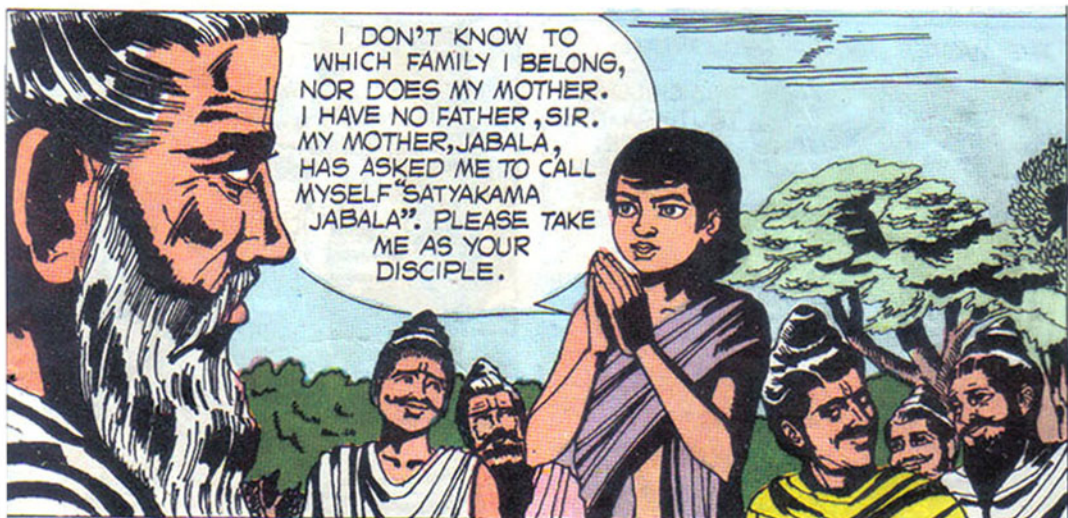
GAUTAMA WAS ONE OF THE FOREMOST OF SAGES IN ANCIENT INDIA. MANY SEEKERS OF TRUTH FOUND THEIR WAY TO HIS FOREST-SCHOOL.



ONE DAY, A BOY OF EIGHT YEARS APPROACHED THE SAGE.

SALUTATIONS TO YOU, O MASTER. ACCEPT ME, SATYAKAMA, AS YOUR DISCIPLE.

TELL ME, CHILD, TO WHICH FAMILY DO YOU BELONG?



I DON'T KNOW TO WHICH FAMILY I BELONG, NOR DOES MY MOTHER. I HAVE NO FATHER, SIR. MY MOTHER, JABALA, HAS ASKED ME TO CALL MYSELF "SATYAKAMA JABALA". PLEASE TAKE ME AS YOUR DISCIPLE.

BEFORE THE SAGE COULD SPEAK, A SENIOR DISCIPLE INTERPOSED.

SIR, ONLY A BRAHMANA IS ENTITLED TO SACRED KNOWLEDGE. SATYAKAMA MAY NOT BE ONE.

HE WHO SPEAKS THE TRUTH WITHOUT FEAR OR HESITATION IS A BRAHMANA.

SATYAKAMA, I ACCEPT YOU AS MY DISCIPLE. WHAT GOAL HAVE YOU SET FOR YOURSELF?

SIR, I WANT TO EXPERIENCE BRAHMAN—THE SUPREME REALITY.

THE MASTER BECAME THOUGHTFUL.

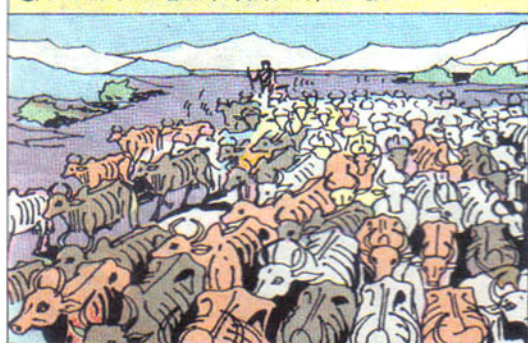
THIS CHILD IS TRUTHFUL AND SINCERE. I WILL HELP HIM IN ACHIEVING HIS GOAL.

ALL RIGHT. COME WITH ME.

THE MASTER TOOK HIM TO THE CATTLE-PEN.



SATYAKAMA LEFT WITH THE CATTLE.

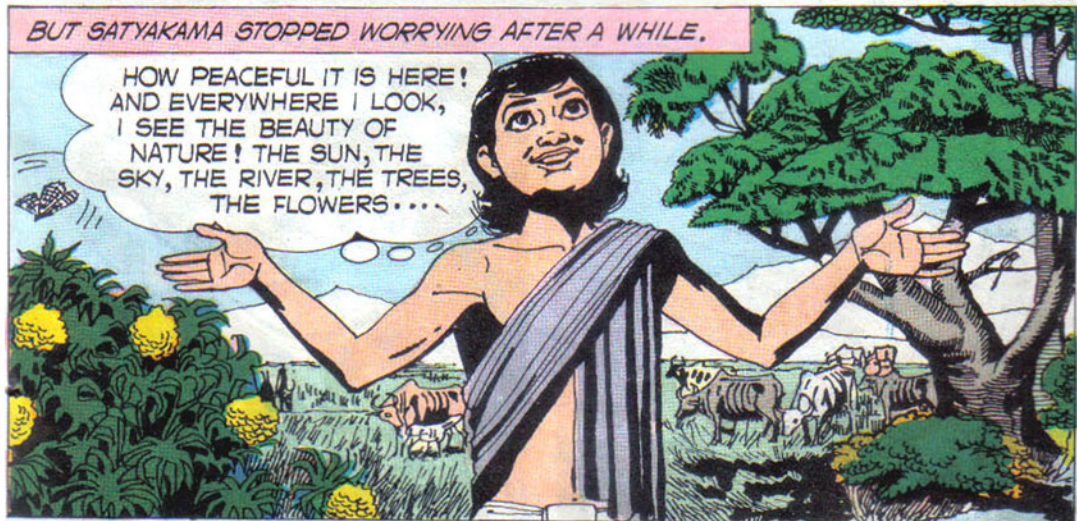


I TOLD THE GURU THAT I WANT TO EXPERIENCE BRAHMAN. I WONDER WHY HE SENT ME TO THE FOREST. IS BRAHMAN TO BE FOUND IN THE FOREST?



BUT SATYAKAMA STOPPED WORRYING AFTER A WHILE.

HOW PEACEFUL IT IS HERE! AND EVERYWHERE I LOOK, I SEE THE BEAUTY OF NATURE! THE SUN, THE SKY, THE RIVER, THE TREES, THE FLOWERS...



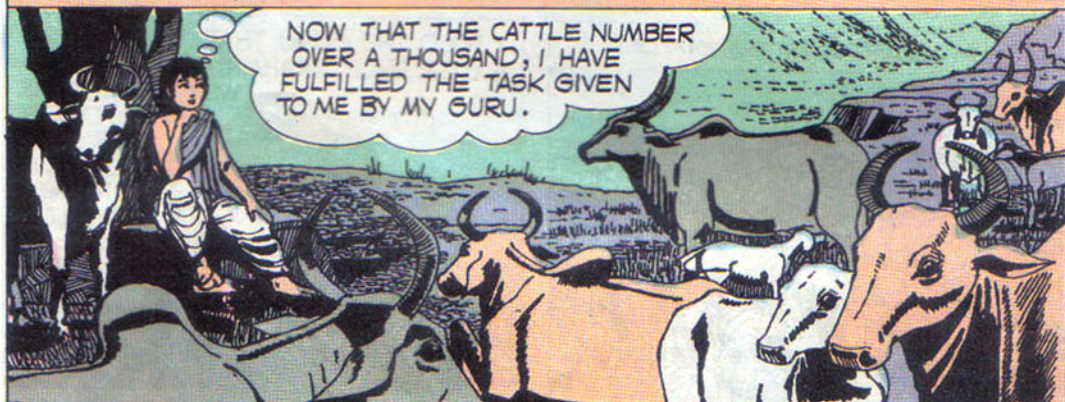
HE TOOK GOOD CARE OF THE CATTLE.



AT DUSK, WHILE THE CATTLE RESTED, HE MEDITATED.



UNDER HIS CARE, THE COWS IMPROVED IN HEALTH AND INCREASED IN NUMBER.



BUT AS HE WAS PREPARING TO RETURN TO HIS GURU HE FOUND THAT ONE CALF WAS MISSING. HE SEARCHED EVERYWHERE—IN THE NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST.



FINALLY HE FOUND THE CALF —

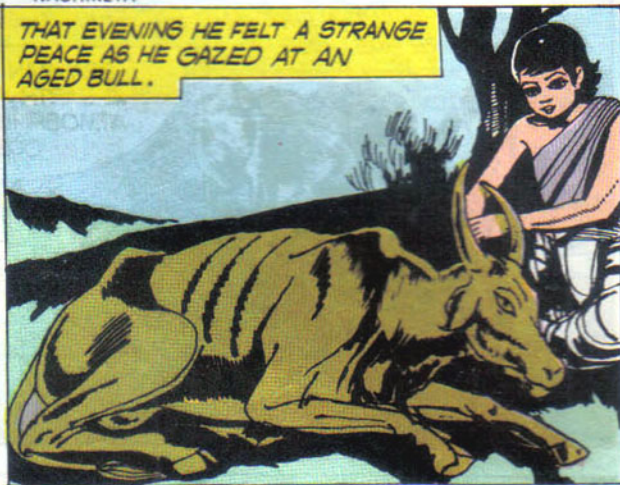


THEN HE BECAME THOUGHTFUL.

WILL I BE ABLE TO FIND
BRAHMAN ALSO?



THAT EVENING HE FELT A STRANGE
PEACE AS HE GAZED AT AN
AGED BULL.



HE THEN THOUGHT HE HEARD THE BULL SPEAKING.

BRAHMAN IS IN THE
NORTH. HE IS IN THE
SOUTH, THE EAST
AND THE WEST.



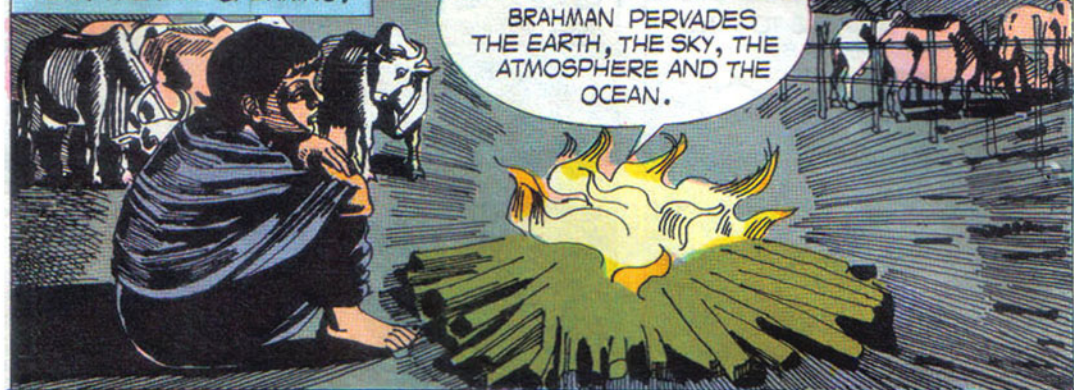
THAT'S TRUE! WHY SEARCH FOR
HIM? HE IS PRESENT EVERY-
WHERE.



THAT DAY HE STARTED ON HIS RETURN JOURNEY,
TAKING THE CATTLE WITH HIM.



AT DUSK HE BUILT A FIRE AND SAT BY IT. THEN HE FELT HE COULD HEAR THE FIRE SPEAKING.



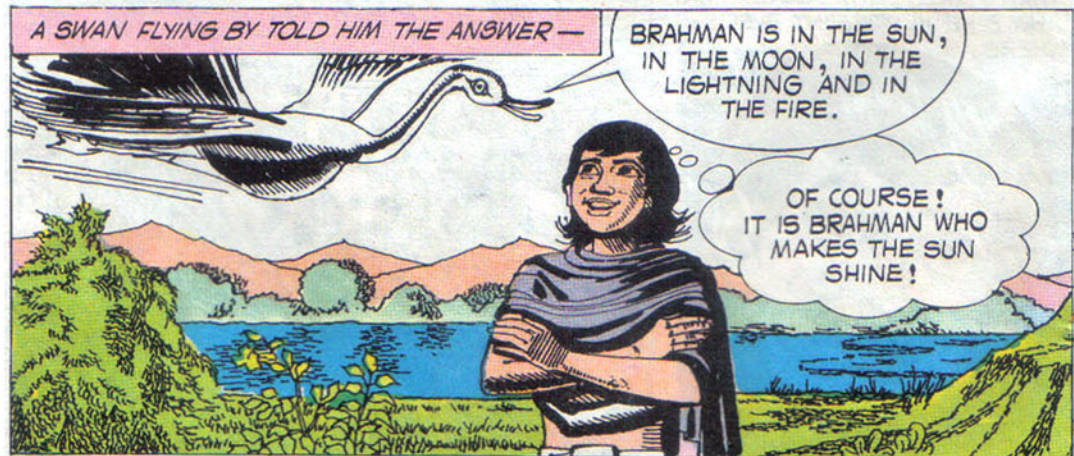
YES, BRAHMAN IS ENDLESS LIKE THE SKY.



THE NEXT MORNING WHEN THE SUN ROSE —



A SWAN FLYING BY TOLD HIM THE ANSWER —



SATYAKAMA STOOD STILL AS NEW THOUGHTS FLOODED HIS MIND.

THEN WHO MAKES
ME BREATHE?

WHO MAKES
ME SEE, HEAR
AND THINK?

AS A BIRD FLEW PAST HIM, HE RECEIVED HIS ANSWERS.

IT IS BRAHMAN
IT IS BRAHMAN
IT IS BRAHMAN

WHEN SATYAKAMA REACHED THE
FOREST-SCHOOL —

SATYAKAMA,
YOU GLOW LIKE ONE
WHO HAS ATTAINED
KNOWLEDGE OF
BRAHMAN. HOW DID
THIS HAPPEN?

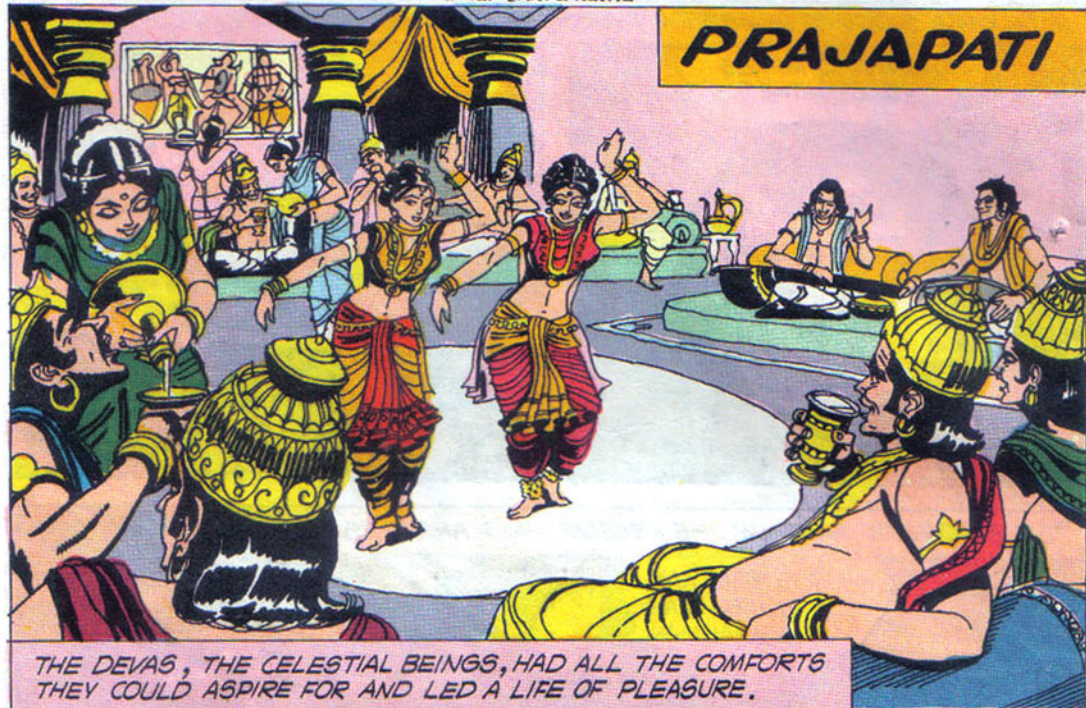
SATYAKAMA DESCRIBED HIS
EXPERIENCE.

BUT KNOWLEDGE IMPARTED BY
THE TEACHER HELPS THE MOST
IN ATTAINING ONE'S GOAL.
PLEASE INSTRUCT ME, SIR.

I WILL,
MY SON.

GAUTAMA THEN IMPARTED THE
SACRED KNOWLEDGE TO HIS DESERVING
DISCIPLE, WHO LATER BECAME A GREAT SAGE.

PRAJAPATI



THE DEVAS, THE CELESTIAL BEINGS, HAD ALL THE COMFORTS THEY COULD ASPIRE FOR AND LED A LIFE OF PLEASURE.

HERE IN HEAVEN WE ARE FREE FROM HUNGER, THIRST, OLD AGE AND DEATH. YET WHY AREN'T WE HAPPY?

IT'S TRUE. WE SEEM TO HAVE EVERYTHING, YET WE FEEL THE LACK OF SOMETHING.

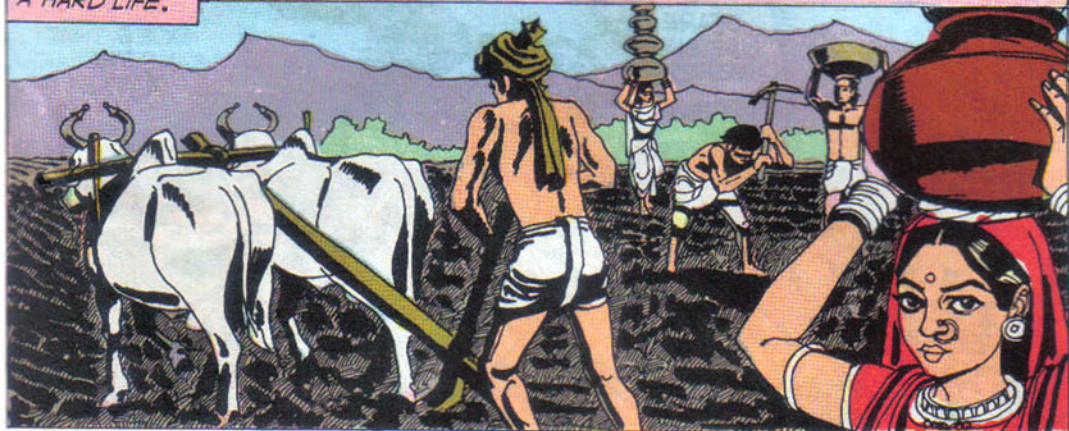


LET US GO TO PRAJAPATI, OUR FATHER, AND SEEK HIS GUIDANCE.



THEY ALL LEFT FOR THE ABODE OF PRAJAPATI, THE FATHER OF ALL CREATION.

UNLIKE THEIR BROTHERS IN HEAVEN, THE MANAVAS—MEN ON EARTH—WERE LEADING A HARD LIFE.



A GOOD HARVEST!
OUR FUTURE IS
SECURE.



ON NO ACCOUNT WOULD THEY PART
WITH WHAT THEY HAD GAINED.

GO AWAY,
YOU WICKED BIRD.
STEALING MY
GRAIN!



YET, DESPITE ALL THE RICHES THEY HAD EARNED AND STORED AWAY, THEY, TOO,
WERE FAR FROM HAPPY.

WE HAVE NO
CONTENTMENT.

WHAT WE LACK
IS PEACE OF
MIND.

LET US
APPROACH
PRAJAPATI,
OUR FATHER,
FOR
GUIDANCE.



THEY LEFT FOR THE ABODE OF PRAJAPATI.

THE ASURAS, THE DEMONS, INSPIRED FEAR AMONG BOTH THE MANAVAS AND THE DEVAS.

SPARE MY LIFE. SHOW MERCY.

MERCY? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? PREPARE TO DIE!



BUT THE ASURAS, TOO, WERE OVERCOME BY A FEELING OF DISSATISFACTION.

ALTHOUGH WE ARE POWERFUL AND FEARED BY ALL, WE ARE NOT HAPPY.



LET US GO TO PRAJAPATI, OUR FATHER, AND SEEK HIS GUIDANCE.

THE DEVAS, THE MANAVAS AND THE ASURAS PRAYED TO LORD PRAJAPATI.

O FATHER, TELL US WHAT WE SHOULD DO TO ACHIEVE CONTENTMENT AND PEACE.



PRAJAPATI, THE FATHER OF ALL BEINGS, UTTERED JUST ONE SYLLABLE.

DA

EVERYONE WAS PERPLEXED.

DA? WHAT COULD THAT MEAN?

I THINK IT IS THE FIRST SYLLABLE OF A SECRET WORD WHICH WILL TELL US WHAT TO DO.

I THINK HE WANTS US TO DISCOVER THE WORD FOR OURSELVES.

THEY ALL LEFT FOR THEIR RESPECTIVE HOMES TO PONDER OVER THE SYLLABLE.

ON RETURNING TO THEIR CELESTIAL WORLD, THE DEVAS WERE ABOUT TO RESUME THEIR LIFE OF PLEASURE —

I'VE GOT IT!
I KNOW WHAT
"DA" MEANS!

TELL US
WHAT IT
MEANS.

"DA" MEANS
"DAMYATA".

YES, THE
FATHER HAS ASKED
US TO RESTRAIN
OURSELVES.

YOU MAY
BE RIGHT.

ALL THE DEVAS PUT ASIDE THEIR PLEASURES.
THEN THEY BEGAN TO PRACTISE SELF-
CONTROL AND EXPERIENCED A SATIS-
FACTION NEVER KNOWN BEFORE.

THE MANAVAS HAD ALSO GONE BACK TO
THEIR WORK.

THOSE BIRDS AGAIN! THEY
PLUNDER OUR GRAIN. WE SHOULD
GET RID OF THEM ONCE AND
FOR ALL!

THE ANGRY MAN WAS ABOUT TO
FLING A STONE AT THE BIRDS
WHEN —

I'VE GOT IT!
"DA" MEANS
"DATT".

THE FATHER
WANTS US TO GIVE
AWAY, NOT TO HOARD.

LET THE
BIRDS SHARE
OUR GRAIN.

MEN BEGAN TO PRACTISE CHARITY.

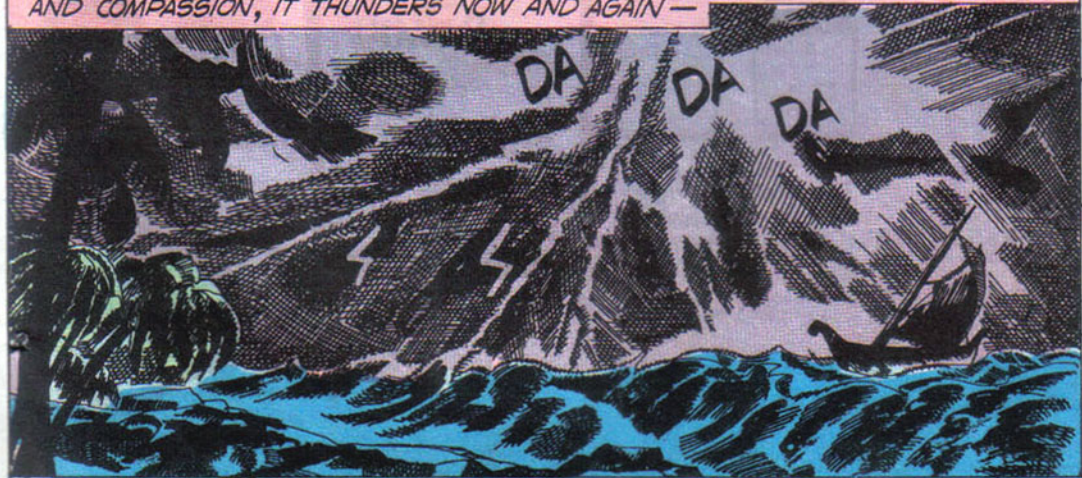
ONLY NOW DO I REALISE
THAT THERE IS JOY IN
GIVING.

HOW RIGHT
YOU ARE!

WHEN THE ASURAS WERE ABOUT TO RESUME THEIR ACTIVITIES —



TO REMIND PEOPLE OF THE THREE CARDINAL VIRTUES, SELF-CONTROL, CHARITY AND COMPASSION, IT THUNDERS NOW AND AGAIN —



DOWN WITH THE REBELS!

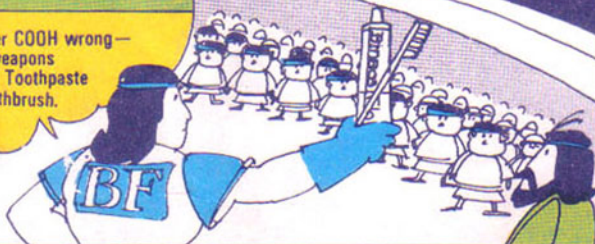


Word reaches the Army Chief.

We must call Binaca-F. Killer COOH knows we're ill-equipped.

Binaca-F accepts the challenge.

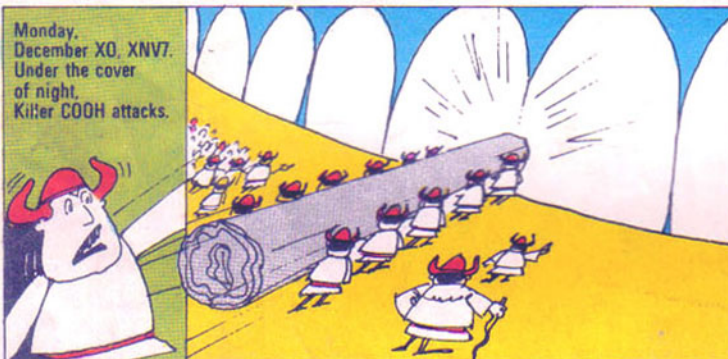
We'll prove Killer COOH wrong — with our new weapons Binaca Fluoride Toothpaste and Binaca Toothbrush.



With regular practice morning and night, the Toothsville army is soon battle-ready.



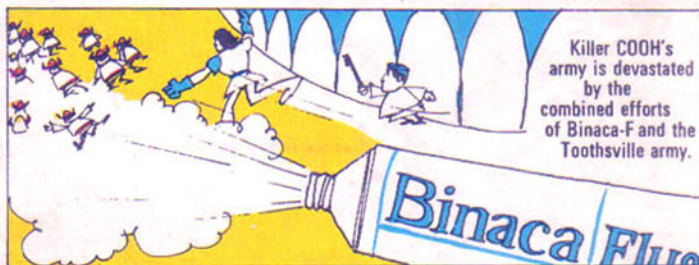
Monday, December XO, XNV7. Under the cover of night, Killer COOH attacks.



But Binaca-F and the Toothsville soldiers strike back.



Retreat men! We're out-powered!



Killer COOH's army is devastated by the combined efforts of Binaca-F and the Toothsville army.



It's a great victory for Toothsville.



It was better arms and training that did it! Thanks to Binaca Fluoride Toothpaste and Binaca Toothbrush.

* Formula for Carboxyl acid group, which attacks tooth enamel and causes painful cavities.

**Brush in extra toughness.
Arrest tooth decay with Binaca Fluoride.**